

## He is Mine by Venomis

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**Genre:** Darkness, Distrust, First Love, Fitting In, Friendship, High School, Jealousy, Loneliness, Loyalty, M/M, Male Homosexuality, Mystery, Peer Pressure, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder - PTSD, Starting Over, Supernatural Elements, Trust

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**Characters:** Dustin Henderson, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Will Byers

**Relationships:** Will Byers/Original Male Character(s)

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**Summary:**

Moving to another town. Starting over. Will's mother is completely convinced it will do her son good, even when he has to leave all his friends behind. Since he has always been an outsider and is cursed with the social skills of a potato, Will's expectations of his new school aren't exactly high.

Things seem to be too good to be true when Ivory invites him over for a game of Dungeons & Dragons. Ivory sets her sights on Will, and Will - who never got any female attention - doesn't know what hits him. Before he knows it, she calls him her boyfriend. While Will is trying really hard to ignore his confusing feelings for Ivory's older brother, the boy confides that his sister's motives to hang out with him are a little off...

Will has no idea which of the two to trust. Turning his back on them however is impossible; nothing will stop Ivory from getting what she

wants while her brother Onyx simply refuses to leave Will's mind...

# 1. The Fall

## Author's Note:

A little author's note; this story takes place after the third season. I kept Hopper alive, that was better for the story line. :) Happy reading!

He'd never wanted to move. Even when people were talking behind his back, even when they were calling him Zombie boy, even though he'd been *very* close to dying a few times – Hawkins had been his home. Sometimes it had felt like he was becoming alienated from his friends because two years of his life had been torn away, but at the moments they needed each other they'd all been there. Unconditionally.

Yet, he hadn't objected when his mom wanted to move. After being alone for such a long time, she had finally fallen in love again. With Bob. And although Bob had felt like an intruder in the beginning, Will had liked him eventually. But then Bob died. His mother's heart broke; he could still see the pain in her eyes, every day new wrinkles seem to conquer her face. She needed a new start, far away from the place where she'd almost lost a child, where her lover had been mauled by a monster.

How then could he complain about a lack of friends? He had nodded when his mom told him there would be nice people on his new school too, even though he didn't believe he would make friends. He was odd. People already had told him so before he was pronounced dead and came back to life. Things wouldn't be different here.

But he would overcome this. He had to. For her.

Luckily she was no longer alone. She was with Hopper now, since a couple of weeks. After the fight with the Mindflayer not much had been left of his house, and although their relationship had been new, he and El had moved in with them.

El – who had become his stepsister now. He liked El, and he liked having someone around who knew what he'd been through. Still, he

found it hard to have her close the whole time, even when they both did their own thing.

Sharing a house with five people – he just needed to get used to it. And after everything that had happened, he got a headache often and he quickly felt like he was suffocating. Already during his first week he'd found a favorite spot in the woods surrounding Willowdale. It was a stone ruin of which two walls still stood upright. There were arches in it, reminding him of a castle. A with moss overgrown stairs led upwards, and from the top of it he could climb on the wall so he was sitting about 12 feet above the ground. That was where he liked to sit, his sketchbook in his lap. He could draw for hours. The ruins would change into a solid fortress, horses would trot across the pavement and captains shouted at their men because the enemy was on the way. A red glow in the distance announced the arrival of the Urg'pits; fire orcs setting everything on fire.

He missed plotting D&D campaigns. Even though he had decided that he was too old for those games, the images kept haunting him. Somehow they needed to leave his mind. Illustrating them was a solution, just like writing them down. Maybe he could write a book one day.

He took a green pencil from his pencil case and started to draw wood trolls who were conscripted by the good guys. If not, it would definitely be an unequal battle. Biting on his lip he continued to work on the scene, for a moment forgetting about everything. About the fact that he had to go to his new school tomorrow, the commotion at home, the nightmares that were haunting him...

A branch snapped. A nasty sensation glided down his neck.

He snapped his head to the side. Because of the wild movement he lost his balance. Briefly he caught a glance of a person wearing black, then his fingers grabbed for a hold. His sketchbook slipped off his lap, his pencil rolling away and falling down.

Fearful screaming he tried to find back his balance, but the wall on which he was sitting was too small. His heart pounded painfully in his chest when he fell. His hands clawed for the upper side of the wall, his fingernails scraping the rugged stone. Somehow he managed

to swing down his legs so he wouldn't fall on his head.

Nevertheless he hit the ground so hard his legs collapsed. A gruesome pain flashed through his ankle and he cried out in pain. The rest of his body slammed against the forest floor as well. Groaning he kept lying on the ground. Stars danced before his eyes, his breathing stuck in his throat because the panic was struggling to get out. The pain – oh the damn pain!

Through a haze of tears he noticed that someone crouched down next to him. The person that startled him! Wiping his wet cheeks he sat up, still sobbing quietly.

"Where does it hurt?" a boy's voice sounded. For a brief moment the other touched his knee.

Will rubbed his eyes, taking a few deep breaths. Then he looked up, right into the most beautiful eyes he had ever seen. They were an icy blue and belonged to a boy who was a couple of years older than him, probably around his brother's age. His face was pale and had an even complexion, his pitch black hair falling straight down halfway his jaw, his bangs combed to the right. In his ears he was wearing black buttons. He didn't exactly look like an average teenager and with his black leather jacket and dark jeans he reminded him of a rockstar.

"My – my ankle," he stammered.

"Let me take a look."

Will was still a little bewildered that someone had shown up at this place, let alone that the person was so helpful. The boy rolled up his pant leg and started to untie his shoe. His fingers felt ice cold as he carefully touched Will's ankle.

"I think it's sprained. Can you stand?"

Will tried to get up, but the moment he put pressure on his foot the pain spread through his leg. Tears were stinging in his eyes. He felt ashamed for the fall and he stared at his knees. "I can't," he whispered.

What now? Should the boy warn an ambulance? Or should he just bite the bullet? The boy walked away from him. For a moment he thought he would abandon him, then Will realized he was gathering his drawings.

Will swallowed. Nervously he picked at a cut in his jeans. The boy reached out his bag and his drawings and sketchbook.

"You're really good at drawing."

Skittishly Will looked up, afraid the boy was mocking him. A blush spread across his cheeks when the boy didn't make an attempt to make fun of him. "Thank you," he muttered.

"I'm Onyx."

Onyx... It was a strange name, but somehow it fitted this boy who looked so different and cool.

"Will," he answered softly. He took his stuff from the boy and put it in his bag.

"Okay Will." Onyx crouched down next to him, laying a hand on his shoulder and giving him a firm squeeze. "Let's try to get you on your feet."

Will took a deep breath and nodded, knowing he couldn't stay here forever.

"Lean on me."

The leather of the jacket stuck to Will's clammy hand when he grabbed the boy's shoulder, trying to get up. He put no pressure on his hurt foot, but the moment his toe slightly touched the ground the pain flared up again. He whimpered. Even limping would hurt. Discouraged he sank back to the ground.

"I can't. Maybe – maybe the pain will go away later. I – I'll wait a little longer. You don't have to stay with me."

"It's getting dark soon. I'm not leaving you here." Onyx grabbed Will's backpack and swung it over his shoulder. "I'll carry you to my

motorcycle."

Before Will could object, the boy shoved an arm underneath his knee pits, clutching another around his back and lifting him. Will felt his cheeks glow in shame. To keep himself from slipping away, he wrapped an arm around Onyx' neck.

Onyx was tall and had a slender built, yet carrying Will seemed easy for him. He didn't dare to look at the boy's face; instead he stared at his knees.

"You're from around?" Onyx asked.

Twigs snapped and leaves shifted underneath his boots. The way Onyx tried to put him at ease made him feel safe around this stranger. After everything he'd been through, he'd often longed for protecting arms.

Again, a pink tinge spread across his cheeks. What a stupid thought – this boy wasn't like Hopper. Onyx was only a few years older than him.

"I moved to Willowdale recently," he answered quietly, mainly to distract himself from the chaos in his head. For a moment his cheek rested against Onyx' shoulder; however when he became aware of it he quickly pulled his head to the side.

He almost told the boy he was from Hawkins but changed his mind just in time. His birthplace had been in the news a lot lately, he didn't want anyone to connect him to the events that took place there.

He raised his head a little. To his relief he saw they were nearing the road. A shiny black bike was waiting for them. Carefully Onyx put him down, Will immediately grasped the vehicle. Now his foot was hanging down again the pain worsened, but he was steadfast not to show his pain.

The boy handed him the helmet that had been dangling down the handlebar. With one foot still in the air, his balance was a joke and when he let go of the bike to put on his helmet, he almost fell.

"Here, lemme do it." Onyx took the helmet from him, placing it on his

head. Skillfully he adjusted the straps, fastening them below Will's chin. His cold fingers slightly touched his skin, causing a strange feeling in Will's stomach.

Onyx returned Will's backpack to him, gestured for him to step back before swaying his leg over the bike.

"You ever been on a bike?"

He shook his head. It was so thrilling that the pain faded a bit. Slowly he climbed on the back of the Harley. One foot he placed steadily on the foot rest, the other with more caution.

"As long as you keep sitting up straight you'll be fine. Okay?"

Will nodded hesitantly when the boy looked over his shoulder, studying his face.

A smirk crossed Onyx's face. "Alright then! You want me to take you home or should I drop you at the ER?"

"No uhm – home is fine," he answered in a shaky voice. If the pain persisted, he could always visit a doctor later. He named his address.

"Okay." Onyx patted his knee. "Here we go."

The words had barely left his lips when the bike started to roar. Will placed his hands loosely on Onyx's sides, holding his breath.

After a few minutes he relaxed a bit. He dared to look around more and had to admit this was actually really cool. Adrenaline rushed through his veins and only when the bike pulled up in front of his house, he remembered his injury.

Carefully he slipped off the bike. It was only a few steps to the door, he would make it without help. A little awkwardly he looked at Onyx.

"Thank you," he said softly. His glance shot to the ice blue eyes of the boy. Will wasn't sure if it was because of the ride or the pain, but suddenly he felt a little nauseous.



"It was the least I could do. After all, I was the one startling you."

Right. What exactly had he been doing there anyway?

Before he could speak out the question – assuming he would have dared to do it in the first place – the rumbling of the bike flared up. Will limped backwards.

Onyx raised his hand, then he hit the gas and sped down the street. Will stared after him with a mixture of confusion and admiration. Only when he rounded a corner, he turned towards the door and limped towards it, wondering if he would ever see Onyx again.

## 2. Weak Souls

### Notes for the Chapter:

In case you had a little wtf-moment; I changed the name of the story from 'Gilded Black' into 'He is Mine' because it fits better. (:

"Opal?" Ivory stared into the antique mirror. "Opal!"

Once again, she didn't hear from him. Frustrated, she clenched her fists. She knew her brother could hear her; if Onyx had been here he would certainly have shown himself.

Not that she would know what to say to him if she *had* seen his face. There wasn't much news to tell him. But this mirror felt like the only connection to her world and she noticed how her former life started to feel more and more like a dream.

Being human started to take its toll. It frightened her. She didn't want to lose her memories, even though some were so painful a name was enough to torture her. But without memories... she was nothing. No one. That was even inhuman for a non-human creature.

Ivory turned away from the mirror, slipping out of her brother's room when she heard the front door open. She had no idea where he'd gone to. Nor did she care; he did his own thing anyway.

His eyes rested upon her as she sat down on the couch. He was always hard to read. Sometimes she believed he felt remorse. His body language told her, and she saw it in the way he could stare out of the window. He never said a word about it. She didn't ask about it.

He could return if he wanted.

*He could.*

They wouldn't make it easy for him, but she believed father would give him a second chance.

"I found him."

His voice dragged her out of her thoughts. She sat up a little straighter. "You did?"

She had always been a bit skeptical about his ability to lure the boy to this town. In their homeland his powers were undisputed, but here... here nobody knew the exact effects.

He leaned against the dinner table, his ankles crossed. "I did."

"What was he like?"

Onyx shrugged his shoulders. "A loner. Young. Insecure. Not exactly a social genius."

She lifted the corner of her mouth. "As if you're describing yourself. Leaving out the insecure part, then."

He scowled at her.

She didn't let it distract her. "You found out anything?"

"He fell off a stairs and strained his ankle. Pain controlled his thoughts, so I couldn't make much sense of it. I did get a hold on some visions when I picked up his drawings. Something with dungeons and dragons, some role playing game if I interpreted it right. It felt like a loss, something he misses."

Ivory took in the information, nodding slowly.

At least that was something. A good starting point.

"Is the library still open?" she asked her brother, who spend an absurd amount of time there.

"Until 8."

"Shall we go there and see if we can find a book about that game? The sooner I have a connection with him, the better."

For a moment Onyx seemed to be lost in thoughts, then he nodded.

"Okay."

Ivory put on her shoes and left the house, together with Onyx. Outside she climbed on the back of his Harley and held his sides.

Ten minutes later they entered the library. Ivory hadn't been here a lot of times. Although her brother tried to learn about this world by reading books, she preferred observing people. Spending a year on a high school had certainly paid off. But this game... She had never heard anyone mention it.

Onyx led her to a shelf with books about leisure activities. His nails were tapping on the spines of the books as he read the titles. Ultimately, he pulled out two weighty looking tomes which he handed to her.

She stared at them. *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*, was written on the cover in a graceful font. On the front the inside of some sort of temple was depicted, with a by fire surrounded bull-like creature that was worshiped by priests. She glanced at the other one. There was an illustration of a green dragon, its mouth opened while a warrior was lashing out at it.

Whatever it was – apparently it required a vivid imagination.

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Sighing, Ivory turned page after page. Her eyes felt tired. She was reading for over an hour and she didn't understand much of it. All kinds of people and creatures were the described in it. Rubbing her face, she looked up to Onyx, who was laying stretched out on the couch. One arm was shoved underneath his head, his other hand holding a book above his face.

"Why don't you read the other book?" she complained. "Instead of whatever you're reading now?"

"Nah," he snorted. "This is your mission."

She rolled her eyes. "You want me to succeed too, right?"

"Hmm-hmm. But I'm in no hurry. I kinda like it around here."

Angrily, she gritted her teeth. "Easy for you to say, you still have your powers."

"And whose fault is that?"

"Yours!" Suddenly she could no longer keep her frustration to herself. "You betrayed me! You ratted on me!"

Onyx pushed himself away from the couch and got up. His light blue eyes changed colors; they became red as blood. A tremor spread through the floor and she flinched. Especially now she was unable to defend herself, she feared his outbursts.

"Sorry," she whispered, staring at the floor.

His ice cold fingers curled around her chin, lifting her head. His eyes were still glowing. "How dare you to speak of betrayal. I protected our people. It was your weak soul that almost destroyed us."

Tears were stinging in her eyes. Memories tumbling through her head, memories of Cyrus. "I loved him," she whispered.

"Love is for humans," he huffed. "You're a disgrace to our people."

She clenched her hands to fists, cursing her brother because he called love a weakness. It had required a terrible amount of courage to do what she had done. "I hope you fall in love too one day," she grumbled. "And that you will know the pain of losing someone in a brutal way."

She pushed her brother away and rushed to her room, tears streaming down her cheeks.

His hollow laughter followed her. "I'm damn sure that's never going to happen, little sister."

### 3. Making Friends

Will had hoped to arrive unnoticed at his new school. He failed; he was using crutches. Now he was not only the new kid, but also the new kid with crutches. Although he was used to people staring at him, things felt different than before. He could only guess to what other kids knew. Maybe nothing – or maybe they knew everything.

Will had intended to make at least one friend today, or at least to *talk* to someone. However, once lunch break started he hadn't spoken to anyone. El had been assigned to a different class and after walking to the lunch room he waited for her. It didn't take long before she waved at him from behind the table where she was sitting with three other girls.

Will felt like his stomach was flipping around. She had never been to school, and yet she was more social than he was. He didn't exactly look forward to sit around a table with four girls. Their giggling made him nervous; he'd never been good with girls. El was an exception. Max wasn't unfriendly either, but he knew she liked the other guys more than him.

However, sitting all by himself was neither something he wanted, so he walked over to the group of girls. They looked curiously at him. Awkwardly he sat down and stared at the table top when one of them offered him a smile.

"This is Will," El introduced him.

"Is he your brother?" a girl asked. Her voice was shrill, making him flinch.

"Sort of."

"Okay! Hi! I'm Melany!"

The words passed by unnoticed. Only when El subtly poked his side, he realized the girl had been speaking to him. Skittishly, he shook her hand.

"Hey, are you that boy that was believed to be dead?" another girl asked, her eyes wide. "My cousin told me he moved to Willowdale. They had even buried him, right?"

Uncomfortably, Will laced his fingers.

El chuckled, even though her tone told him it she was feigning it. "That has to be someone else. We're never involved in something interesting."

Will didn't dare to look up to the girls to see if they believed her. Probably not. There wouldn't be many Wills moving to this place. He glanced at the clock, hoping the break would be over soon.

It would take a little longer.

His eyes wandered across the room. He tried to assess if there were people that would like him. Kids like Mike, Lucas or Dustin. Outcasts, people with weird hobbies or simply nerds. There were a few misfits, he noticed, but he was too shy to walk over to them.

Suddenly, his neck started to itch painfully. A flash of fear traveled through his body. This sensation had always announced the presence of the Mind Flayer, but they had defeated that creature. He doubted there was *really* something triggering his fear; it might also be his trauma that was worsened by how uneasy he felt.

He turned his head to the left when he believed that's where the danger was coming from; where someone was leering at him. There was nothing to be seen; just students – seniors, he thought. He just wanted to divert his attention away when someone shoved back his chair, offering him sight on a dark haired boy who was sitting at a table alone. With his foot he leaned against another chair, a book leaning against his knee.

Onyx!

Again he experienced a strange feeling – but this time in his stomach, and it felt more like a nervous tingle. Suddenly he felt the urge to stand up, sat down next to him and ask about the book that he was reading. He didn't dare to. He had expected Onyx to be graduated a

while ago, but as it seemed he was still in his senior year. He was sitting all alone, although he didn't look lonely. It rather felt like he felt no need for small talk and preferred to read without being disturbed by others.

Will tore his glance away from the boy and started to eat his sandwiches in silence. Again and again his thoughts shot back to last Saturday, when the boy had been so helpful and sweet; carrying him to his motorcycle and taking him home. A tingling sensation spread through his chest, warm and a little nerve-wracking because it was something unknown to him.

His eyes flashed aside, his heart skipping a beat when they met Onyx's icy blue eyes. He wanted to smile to the boy, but his lips were quivering and he quickly cast his glance down. His cheeks started to glow and suddenly he felt immensely ashamed, without knowing why.

Although his appetite was gone, Will plucked at the bread. He missed his friends, who would have distracted him in a situation like this. Around him there were conversations as well, but he quietly wished Onyx would walk over to him to ask how his leg was.

It didn't happen. The buzzer announced the end of lunch break. Only when Will had studied his timetable and swung his bag over his shoulder, he dared to peek aside again.

The table where Onyx had been sitting was empty.

He was caught off guard by the disappointment he felt. What the hell had he been thinking? That Onyx wanted to be friends with him? He was four years younger, he was shy and he wasn't exactly the best company someone could wish for. That Onyx had helped him after his fall, meant nothing and feeling so upset now wasn't making any sense.

Trapped in his own thoughts he went looking for math class. Only when he had left the lunch room, he realized he had barely spoken to El. Although he didn't think she would be surprised; he was lost in his own little world the whole time. This wouldn't raise any questions in her, and if it did, she would probably keep them to herself.



When Will reached math class, the door was already open. He sat down at a table close to the window. He liked being able to look outside, if not he felt trapped. For a long time he stared at the clouds that slowly floated by, and the traffic driving by in front of the school. Only when he saw a movement from the corner of his eye, he looked aside.

"Do you mind if I sit next to you?" a black haired girl asked.

Will stared in bewilderment at her. Her eyes were ice blue, reminding him of Onyx immediately, just like her pale, smooth skin. He felt his cheeks flush when he realized he was thinking about the boy *again*, wondering if they really showed so many similarities or whether it was just in his head.

"Yeah, sure," he muttered softly – too softly. After clearing his throat, he repeated his answer.

She smiled while sitting down. "You're new, right?"

A bit awkwardly he scratched his thumbnail across a few carvings in the table. It felt like a unnecessary question. The school wasn't that big, so she surely knew.

"Yeah," he said nevertheless.

"My name is Ivory."

A little suspicious he studied the girl's face. Were all kids around here named after stones? No – that hadn't been the case with Melany.

"Will," he answered.

"I moved to this place around a year ago," she told him. "It takes time to get used around here, it feels like everyone knows each other their whole lives. Luckily I did make some friends. I can introduce you to some cool people if you like?"

Will doubted her definition of 'cool' would correspond to his. Although – she looked different than most girls he knew. She was wearing a black dress with tulle and small silver chains, and with her dark make-up she reminded him of the few gothic people that had

been on his former school. As went with most subgroups, Will had no problem with them; he actually respected everyone who dared to be different.

Slowly, a smile tugged at his lips. Maybe this was the friend he'd been wishing for. She might be a girl, but she surely wasn't the giggly type like the girls that had been with El a few minutes ago.

"Yeah, sure," he said hesitantly.

"Cool!" She flashed him another smile, taking her bag from the floor and taking out her books.

Will noticed how pale her skin was. There was a strange hue over it, like she was made of porcelain.

"What happened to your foot?" she asked after putting all her stuff at display.

Her question made him feel uncomfortable, even though it was a normal question. But *many, many* questions had been asked him when he had escaped from the Upside Down, and ever since, other people's curiosity made the walls around him grow fast.

"I fell," he answered. "Of a wall."

"Is it broken?"

He shook his head. "No, just strained. But it might still take six weeks before it's healed."

"That sucks. You walked with crutches all holiday long?"

He shook his head. "No – only since yesterday."

Her eyes met his. She seemed to sense that her questions didn't help him to feel comfortable and she kept silent, offering him an understanding smile.

Will was grateful to her. Most girls never knew when to stop talking, but she seemed different than any girl he'd ever met. And he liked it – people who were different and who didn't get spooked by people

like him. Maybe he wouldn't have to spend all his lunch breaks alone or intruding himself upon El the whole time.

## 4. Enchanting Melodies

Will had believed that Ivory was an outcast, just like him. It was quite the opposite. In the days that followed, he found out that she was popular. That people liked to talk to her and that she was already invited to two parties. Once he had swallowed that truth, he thought she would turn her back on him soon. He was not interesting. He was not social. He didn't like attention.

These worries however were groundless. Every day she saved a seat for him in the canteen. It made him a bit suspicious, he didn't understand what she liked about him. Still, he kept returning to her. Quietly he listened to the conversations at the table that always bored him; about sports and pop stars and their gossip about weird people like him. He didn't feel comfortable around them, but what else could he do?

At least he wasn't alone. People weren't calling him names, they didn't make fun of him. The rumors about the zombie boy that had done the rounds at his first day, were silenced. Ivory was the reason for it, he believed.

But why?

He just didn't know.

He wasn't the only one surprised by the girl's friendliness. After one day, he already discovered that El and Ivory didn't exactly like each other. She never complained about it, she didn't speak a lot to him in the first place, but he could see it in the look in her eyes and when his brother started to question him about his new friends, he had a feeling that she was the one behind it and that she had shared her worries with Jonathan.

He couldn't explain Ivory's interest in him. Up to now he however had no reason to distrust her, and so he tried to keep those feelings away. She made school a better place for him, what else could he long for?

This morning she had asked him if he wanted to meet after school.

He was a little anxious about it, it also felt a little quick, but he hadn't dared to tell her no. Never before a girl had asked him to hang out and it made him nervous. She had suggested to go to his house. He wasn't sure if he liked it; it was a familiar place, even when he moved into it so short ago, but it also felt like he was allowing an intruder inside his life.

But he couldn't hide from the world for the rest of his life. She was nice, there was no reason to turn her down. Nevertheless, the prospect to meet up after school distracted his thoughts, while he was worrying about what Jonathan and his mom would think of her. What if they agreed with El? Or what if Ivory discovered that he wasn't as nice as she thought? Would he end up alone again?

The thoughts kept racing through his head while the hours passed by. After his last class he had an appointment with his mentor, who asked him questions about his first week. He answered them like the good boy he was, although he found it hard to stay focused on the conversation.

He felt relieved when the man told him to go home. Leaving the classroom, he limped through the empty hallway. Once he neared the music room he heard a beautiful melody, making him stop. It felt like he was not only hearing piano play, but also a violin and a harp; instruments that weren't exactly common in high school – and especially not after classes. He wasn't sure what happened to him, but the Celtic sounding melody grasped him and pulled him towards the door. Through the crack, he peeked inside.

There was only one person in the music room, playing on a keyboard that was apparently able to bring forth a lot of different tones. He was sitting on the left side of the room, his back towards the wall so Will could see him from the side. The boy's eyes were closed while his fingers glided across the keys of the piano. His face was relaxed, as if playing the notes didn't demand any concentration.

Will's mouth felt dry.

Since the day they met, he hadn't spoken to Onyx anymore. He had seen him now and then, but he always had the feeling the boy wanted to forget about their meeting. To keep staring at him didn't

feel right, but he simply couldn't tear away his glance. It felt like the music notes were trying to lure him deeper into the room and he had to brace himself to make sure it didn't happen.

The boy dipped his head a little, opened his eyes again and punched in some buttons, changing the sound. He stared forward for a moment, scribbled down something on a note and started another composition.

Will had no idea how long he kept standing there, listening to the music that sounded so different from anything he'd ever heard. The tone became harder; what had started as a lovely melody was turning into something ominous, like a march to battle. It tickled his imagination, painting scenes in his mind.

Suddenly the music stopped. It felt like he ran into a wall; startled he looked up. His cheeks started to glow when he realized that Onyx had caught him staring.

"Sorry," he muttered. "I – I didn't... I didn't want to disturb you."

Skittishly he flinched, afraid of a sneer because he had secretly been listening. Now he thought about it, he realized it might look a little creepy.

Onyx however showed him a smile. "You may listen. Did you like it?"

With an increasing blush, he nodded. "I've never heard anything like this. I didn't know a keyboard can mimic other instruments too."

"It's a synthesizer, not a keyboard. You can compose your own music with it," he answered. "The one I have at home has more functions, but a different environment is more inspiring." He smiled. "But as an artist, you'll probably know all about that."

Will's blush deepened. He had never considered himself as an artist and it felt like a giant compliment. Onyx's attention made him feel a bit light in the head and he leaned against the door frame.

"You can sit here if you want to keep listening?" Onyx pointed to a chair to his right. "I assume you have to take it easy, right? How is your ankle anyway?"

Will's hands felt clammy as he limped towards the boy, the jitters in his stomach increasing with every step he took.

"I can manage it," he answered, lowering himself on a chair. "It took some time to get used to the crutches, but I'm fine now."

He felt a little awkward. For a week Onyx had pretended they didn't know each other and now he was all friendly again. It confused him.

Onyx started to play again. The tones were light, tinkling, reminding him of dancing pixies in the moonlight. His fingers were trembling, he felt an intense longing to draw. He pushed the feeling away – he didn't want to look like a complete idiot. Instead, he concentrated on his breathing until it completely slowed down.

It felt like time didn't exist in this room. The melody swung itself around him, filling him with a tingling warmth and seducing him to a passive listening. Sometimes it felt like he was about to drift away. He tried to fight it, especially when the tone became heavier again and seemed to tell some epic tale.

He widened his eyes when he realized he had closed them, startling as he noticed that Onyx had been looking at him. An intense heat crept to his cheeks. Quickly he glanced at the floor while his breathing sped up again.

"This is part of my final project," Onyx told him. Only now, Will realized how melodious his voice sounded – it was beautiful, even enchanting. There were only soft tones his fingers were producing now. "I compose a piece of music that should fit an epic movie. It's supposed to tell a story."

Will looked up again. He didn't understand why the older boy was telling him all this; why he didn't simply send him away.

"It sounds really beautiful," he said softly. "I've never heard music like this."

Onyx turned a little more towards him, slipping his hands into his pockets. Will still thought to hear the music. "What music do you like?"

"Umm. Metallica. Mötley Crue. Alice Cooper. Things like that."

Onyx lifted the corner of his mouth. "Those are some awesome bands."

Will beamed. Up to now, his brother had been the only one who appreciated his music taste – which wasn't a surprise, for he wouldn't have known about these bands if it wasn't for him. "A few weeks ago my brother and I went to see Van Halen. It was my first concert, it was really cool! We were really close to the stage."

His enthusiasm made him blush. Except for Jonathan, there was no one with whom he could talk about music.

"I bet it was awesome. My last concert was Def Leppard. You know 'em?"

Will nodded enthusiastically.

"You also play an instrument?"

"No. Although I'd love to learn how to play guitar. Or – or what you play. The synthesizer. Although I know no other people who play that."

Shyly, he bit his lip.

"You wanna give it a try?"

Will had no idea what was going on with his body, but his heart seemed to flutter and there were a lot of things churning inside his stomach. Carefully he put away his crutches and shuffled towards the boy. There was a small piano bench, and the idea that he would sit so close to Onyx blocked the air in his lungs. Immediately he felt ashamed of that thought; Onyx would probably stand up so he could toy with the instrument.

None of that however happened; when he stood next to the boy, Onyx placed his hands on Will's narrow hips and pulled him on his lap. Will's eyes went wide in shock – he had never been on another boy's lap! He was sure his face was looking like a tomato. Onyx had already carried him in his arms, and now this... Will didn't know



where to look.

"Relax, little one," he said in a teasing tone. His hand rested upon Will's hip. "Look, these are the main buttons." He pointed to a row of buttons at the top. "What instrument do you want to try?"

Will barely heard his words. All he could think about, was the hand on his hip, and the ease with which the older boy had pulled him on his lap. His heart beat so wildly in his chest he was afraid the other would hear it.

"Umm... maybe the violin?" he heard himself say.

Onyx pressed some buttons, put his fingers on the keys and moved them in an order that was probably supposed to be easy. Will however lacked any concentration; he felt like a nervous wreck and yet he didn't want to leave.

Suddenly the door was opened, startling Will in such a way he sat up straight immediately. He noticed how Onyx quickly took his hand from Will's hip. There was a pit in his stomach; it felt like they had done something that was forbidden.

"Why are you here?" It was Ivory who was standing in the doorway. "I'm waiting for you for over an hour!"

Will felt even hotter. He hadn't thought about their appointment for a moment. "I – I didn't know it was this late." Quickly he got up, staggered to his crutches and headed towards her. "Sorry," he said honestly. "I heard music and I got distracted."

She huffed. She really was angry.

Will's shoulders slumped down. Before he left the room, he peeked over his shoulder. He glanced at Onyx, but the boy had turned his attention back to his composition. The magic was gone.

Quietly, Will followed Ivory, convinced that he could still feel Onyx' hand burning on his hip.

"Sorry," he said once again when the grim expression didn't leave her face.

She stood still and gave him a fierce look. "Why were you sitting on my brother's lap? Are you gay?"

He stared at her with wide eyes. He didn't know what shocked him more; the revelation that Onyx was her brother or her blunt question.

"N-no," he muttered, even though he knew it was a lie. He however didn't want the whole school to whisper that he liked boys. He didn't want to stand out. He just wanted to be left alone. "I never expected him to pull me on his lap when he wanted to teach me how to play."

She sighed, then she suddenly grasped his hand. Again he froze. "It's okay, I get it," she said in a sweet voice. "But you better stay away from him. He has a... really dark side."

Will pulled up his shoulders. He didn't know what to say; deep inside he only wished she hadn't found him in the music room so he still would have been there with Onyx.

## 5. Clenched Teeth

Will wasn't exactly the hottest guy in school, but Ivory believed he was cute. His greenish brown eyes however were always hiding the words he didn't want to speak. It frustrated her. Back in the day, she had the ability to invade other people's minds. Not everyone's mind — if she would try it with her brothers her brain would shrivel up, but it couldn't be that hard with a human like Will Byers.

Right now however, she could only guess what the boy was thinking. No matter how much sand would slip through her fingers, nothing would happen. Every piece of art would collapse, it would crumble until no one recognized its form. It felt like an important piece of her was robbed from her.

From the corner of her eye she looked aside. Will was walking next to her, his eyes aimed at the pavement. What was on his mind? Was he looking for words to say to her, was he shy? Or was it her brother who had swallowed up his thoughts?

She gritted her teeth as she thought back to half an hour ago, when Will had been sitting on his lap. A fierce anger bubbled up inside of her. The moment she was home, she would tell him she wouldn't take this from him. Will was her ticket home, and she wouldn't allow Onyx to ruin it for her with his stupid games!

Taking a deep breath, she tried to hide her anger. She should try to have a conversation with him. But about what? He was boring. How could she make him trust her? She had saved a seat for him during lunch and she helped him with the material being taught, but it felt like there was a massive divide between them. The two sides were only connected with a rickety rope bridge and neither of them dared to cross it.

*You're on your way to his home, Ive, she reminded herself. You're doing great. Don't worry so much.*

"It's here." Will stood still in front of a garden, awkwardly he pointed at the front door. He looked skittishly at her, as if he was afraid that she would tell him the house was ugly and walk away.

Well — it *was true*. It was an ugly house. Although that went for all houses here. They were all so... unimaginative, so ordinary. So boring. Everything was boring around here.

Nevertheless she feigned a smile and stepped on the garden path. Will put the key in the lock once he reached the door and swung it open. She heard voices further ahead in the house, whose owners she met when they reached the kitchen. Jane had hoisted herself on the counter top and was talking to a middle-aged woman, although their conversation came to an end once they saw her.

The woman rushed towards her. "Hello dear! I'm so happy to meet you! Will told me a lot about you! My name is Joyce."

Will had told her about her? That was even better than she imagined. Ivory's lips formed an enthusiastic smile and she shook Joyce's hand. "It's a pleasure to meet you, ma'me."

Her glance slid to Jane, Will's sister. Or half-sister, she wasn't sure about their family ties yet. She had never spoken to the girl, but there was something odd about her — a certain vibe, making her skin crawl. It was different than the vibe surrounding Will — she could see the darkness that was still surrounding him like a shadow. Traces of domination, of defeat. If she closed her eyes, she could taste his fear on her tongue. An ancient fear, buried deep within his soul. A fear that would always come back on unguarded moments.

The same couldn't be said about Jane. She was also different than the other kids, but Ivory couldn't place her finger on it. It irritated her. And even worse, the girl sensed that she was different too. She didn't trust her either; she could see it in that inscrutable glance, the tense lines around her mouth.

Joyce offered them lemonade and cookies, and they made some small talk. That is — Ivory and Will's mother were talking. Will himself stared out of the window, seeing things no one else could see. Jane chose to look at Ivory's face instead of the world on the other side of the window, and her gaze was so intense it felt like she was trying to invade her thoughts. It tickled her curiosity. It was too bad she acted so hostile; otherwise they might have been useful to one another.

In the end, she got Will to show her his room. It was a typical boy's room, it was even a bit childish with the wallpaper full of planets and the action and fantasy figures that were displayed at the shelves. Will sat down on the edge of his bed and clutched his hands between his knees. He looked a little lost. If she didn't change anything, it might be the last time he took a girl home.

Ivory walked through the room, watched the figures and turned to the shelves that were filled with voluminous fantasy books. She thought back to that game, Dungeons & Dragons.

"Do you like fantasy?" She turned around and offered him a sweet smile. It was only a starting point, hopefully he didn't expect an in-depth discussion of books now. She had only seen a couple of fantasy movies and they hadn't been very imaginative.

Will perked up and nodded. "Did you read one of the books?"

She shook her head. "No... I'm not much of a reader."

*But you should talk to my brother.*

No — she didn't want him to come anywhere near her brother.

"But I have some friends who are crazy about fantasy. Lately they were talking about some game... Something with dragons?"

"Dungeons & Dragons?" His whole face lit up.

"Yeah... They wanted to try it. None of them had played it before, I think they got stuck when they were unraveling the rules."

She bit the inside of her cheek. Was she too transparent now? No — she shook it off. He had no reason to assume that she had done her research.

"Oh... Well, I can be the dungeon master? I used to play it with my friends all the time." There was a sadness in his eyes as he mentioned his friends. "Although we might be too old to play."

"That's ridiculous! Nobody is ever too old to play a game! I'm sure I can even convince my brother to join us and he's 18."

It was a lie. He wasn't 18 and she could never persuade him to join that stupid game. She didn't even know why she brought up her brother, maybe only to monitor his response.

And that response only made her grit her teeth, for there was a blush on his cheeks and he dropped his eyes. She clenched her fingers to fists until her nails were cutting her flesh. Damn it — what the hell had her brother done to that boy? They had been together for just a few minutes! He was supposed to fall in love *with her*! As Will looked up again, she quickly relaxed her fingers and replaced her grimace with a smile.

"So we have a deal? Are you going to teach us that game?"

He nodded enthusiastically.

Hopefully he would be just as enthusiastic when he realized that Onyx wouldn't join them. If it was up to her, the two would never meet again.

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Onyx didn't even look up when she came home. She scrunched her nose at the sight of the newspaper he was reading. The *newspaper*. Why the hell would they care what was going on in this world? All she wanted was to go back. She headed to the couch and planted her hands on her hips.

"What the hell were you doing this afternoon!" she burst out. "You were enchanting him with your music! There are plenty of others to do your magic tricks on!"

Onyx lowered the newspaper. "I didn't mean to lure him. I can't help it his ear is more sensitive than that of everyone else."

She snorted. "And I guess you didn't mean to make him sit on your lap either?"

Her brother shrugged his shoulders. "I just taught him to play. What's the big deal?"

She thought back to Will's heated cheeks. It was a big deal! "He likes you more than he likes me."

"Well maybe you should teach him some music instead of commanding him like a damn dog," Onyx huffed.

"I don't treat him like a dog!" she bit back. "I just... I just don't want you to tie him to you with that cursed music of yours! He is mine! *I* need him!"

Onyx chuckled, it sounded macabre. "Well you *do* talk about him as if he's your pet. Don't take it out on me if he picks another owner." He smirked. "And who knows, if you behave yourself I might lend him to you. In the end, it doesn't matter who he trusts."

It *did* matter. She didn't want to depend on Onyx; she had to earn her return herself. If not, she would owe her brother something and that was the last thing she wanted. She wanted to survive on her own.

"Just stay away from him," she grumbled. "You're only doing this to piss me off."

"Maybe." He flipped the page of the newspaper. "And maybe I have another reason."

She rolled her eyes. She couldn't think of any other reason, he was only trying to sound mysterious now. Peeved, she turned around and walked away.

## 6. Sleepless Nights

Finally Friday was there. Will had spent evenings preparing the game, feeling so nervous he'd tossed and turned all night. He was wondering if the others would like it — especially because his friends in Hawkins had shown less and less interest in the campaigns he devised. Ivory had invited three others, but he didn't know who.

Would Onyx join the game? The question kept coming back to him. Ivory told him that she could persuade her brother to play, but she had never mentioned him again. Maybe it was for the best if Onyx wasn't around, he always felt so strange when the boy was close and he didn't want others to notice — and he certainly didn't want the boy himself to know it.

Despite these thoughts, he was disappointed when he was awaited by three other students by the end of the day. Kim, a Korean boy with huge glasses who could talk about dinosaurs for hours; Mandy, who had never looked him in the eye, and Simon, a boy that somehow reminded him of Dustin, causing a strange sense of familiarity.

"You all know Will, right?" Ivory said.

He startled when she grabbed his hand.

Simon nodded enthusiastically, Mandy glanced briefly at him and Kim was distracted by a tall blonde who walked by and almost bluntly ignored the staring boy.

Ivory squeezed his hand. "I'm so excited! Shall we go?"

Will nodded a little dazed. Actually he wanted to pull his hand away from Ivory's, but her grasp was quite compelling and he was afraid to piss her off. Therefore he let her, although there was a nagging feeling in his stomach when she kept holding his hand while they walked to her house. Yesterday had been the first day he'd gone to school without crutches, but now he wished he would have used them a little longer.

Once they reached their house about five minutes later, she finally



let go of his hand to open the door. Quickly he shoved his hands in his pockets. Shame made him feel hot all over, and awkwardly he looked into another direction. After opening the door, Will went inside. Just like the others he took off his shoes and entered the living room in his socks. There wasn't much in the room they entered. There was some furniture here and there, but most tables and other surfaces were empty. It even felt like their footsteps were echoing. There were no pictures on the walls, nothing around here told them something about the people living here. Except for the bookshelves — Will believed books always said something about one's personality. Curiously he walked towards them. There were many books he'd read too, and he thought of all the times he had seen Onyx read during their lunch breaks. Without really realizing what he was doing, he stretched out his hand to caress the spines of the books. For a moment he believed he heard music, just like the time he had walked past the music room. His cheeks heated up at the memories of that day. When he closed his eyes, he could still feel Onyx's hands on his hips.

Will felt another presence next to him. For a moment his heart skipped a beat when he saw a flash of black hair when he turned around — then he realized it was Ivory.

"Come on, let's begin!" She grabbed his wrist and pulled him along as if he wouldn't be able to find the table by himself.

Will put his bag on the table, zipped it open and took out the equipment. Opening his notebook, he took out the character sketches.

"I made a basic character for each of you, that's easier while playing for the first time. There is a bard, a druid, a ranger and a Barbarian."

Will explained the strengths and weaknesses of each character, waited until they had divided the roles and let them come up with a name for their characters.

They obviously needed to loosen up a bit, especially Mandy didn't seem to know whether she liked it at all or not. Will tried not to be discouraged by her, and he started to set out the scenarios. He had worked out a story in which four pirates had failed to commandeer a

vessel, where after they had been dropped off at a desert island with only a broken compass, a revolver with one bullet and a piece of moldy cheese.

Easily, Will took up the role of the storyteller while he described all the obstacles they came across. With their dices they took fights with giant crabs and swarms of rabid seagulls. Even when his public was still holding back a little, Will felt the adrenaline rush through his veins. He had missed this, and he smiled at Ivory, grateful for the chance she had given him.

The front door opened, footsteps came closer. Immediately Will fell silent and he stared at the doorway. It didn't *have* to be him, it might be Ivory's parents as well. He held his breath when seeing a movement. It indeed was him.

Onyx stepped into the living room. His black hair was messy as if he had rode his bike without a helmet, and looking absent-minded, he ran his fingers through it. His glance wandered almost carelessly across the group, eventually resting upon Will. He got really warm and murmured a greeting.

Now, the others looked over their shoulders too.

"Hey." A brief smile crossed Onyx's face and he walked closer to the them.

Will's heart did overtime when the boy came to stand next to him, leaning over the table to see what exactly they were doing, by which his hand rested upon Will's shoulder as if he was afraid to lose his balance otherwise.

Will couldn't help he began to breathe more rapidly. He could feel every individual finger on his shoulder. Nervously he stared at the tabletop. Luckily he wasn't wearing his D&D costume, like he had done often with his old friends. He had been afraid that the others — and especially Onyx — would find it stupid.

"So this is the famous Dungeons & Dragons," he said, squeezing Will's shoulder so suddenly the boy almost jumped.

"Yes. Umm... We were in the middle of a fight with an enormous crab and it's Kim's turn to attack the beast." His cheeks flushed in shame; he really must sound like a moron.

Kim looked at his character sketch. "I will use my sword." He rolled the dice. Twelve.

Will glanced at his notes. "You hit him!" He tried to put the same enthusiasm in his voice as before, wrote down two bars to take away two health points. "You chopped off one claw, making the blood stream out of the wound, drenching the sand. In the distance there is a howling — wolves! Wolves are attracted by the scent of blood!" He took a few pieces and scattered them across the playing field.

Next to his ear he heard Onyx chuckle while he pulled back his hand. "Good luck with the wolves, kiddo's."

*Kiddo's. He believes it is stupid.*

Will swallowed, suddenly close to tears. From the corner of his eye he saw that Onyx walked to the couch. Instead of going to his room so he would no longer distract Will, he decided to read a book on the couch.

Will took a deep breath, took up his role as story teller again and tried to distance himself from Ivory's brother. He continued the story, and slowly he sunk deeper into the world he created and forgot about Onyx most of the time.

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After two hours, the campaign came to an end. Ivory clapped her hands delightedly. "That was so cool!" She looked at the others. "My boyfriend is amazing, isn't he! I can't believe you came up with this all by yourself!"

Will stared at her. Did he hear it right? Did she say *my boyfriend*? He wasn't — right? He would have known that, right?

Restlessly he moved on his chair while the others scattered compliments as well. Getting up, she placed a hand on his shoulder like her brother had done; then she sat down on his lap.

Will gulped, his eyes wide. What in the world was happening to him? She wrapped an arm around his neck, looked him in the eye and kissed him on the lips.

Will panicked as he felt her lips upon his. He didn't want to kiss her! By reflex he tried to pull his face away, but since he was seated on a chair he couldn't get away from her, and she pushed her lips even more fiercely against his mouth. He was so overwhelmed that all his limbs felt numb, too heavy to take action.

Ultimately, she pulled back her face and smiled at him.

Embarrassed, he looked away.

She giggled quietly. "He is still a little shy," she told her friends.

Will said nothing. He didn't dare to tell her he didn't want to be her boyfriend. He had a good time today, and he had a feeling that he was on his way to make some friends which he didn't want to ruin by disappointing Ivory now.

"I uh — I have to go home," he said. "It's — it's late."

She pouted. "But you can have dinner at my place?"

Will's eyes shot aside, his heart almost exploding when Onyx caught his glance immediately, a concerned look in his eyes.

"No," he muttered. "I uh — I don't feel well. Sorry."

"I will give him a ride home."

Will's legs felt like they were made of jelly when he heard Onyx's offer.

"You — you really don't have to," he stammered.

"It's really no big deal. It's Ivory's turn to cook anyway."

Wronged, Ivory crossed her arms in front of her chest. "He is *my* boyfriend. I'll take him home if he feels sick."

"How?" Onyx huffed. "You're gonna walk him home? The sooner he's home, the better."

Will intertwined his fingers. Right now, all he wanted was to leave; he was confused and he suddenly *really* felt sick.

He didn't even know whether Ivory was giving in or that Onyx was simply ignoring her, but the boy got up from the couch and walked to a small hallway, from which he returned a minute later with two helmets in his hands.

Hesitantly, Will took one. He was almost too nervous to say goodbye to the others, but he muttered a greeting nevertheless while shoving his belongings in his bag.

For some reason he didn't dare to look at Ivory, and when Onyx turned around, Will quickly followed him.

"You really don't have to do this," Will said quietly after closing the door behind him. "I — I'm okay. Maybe I just needed a bit of fresh air."

"You shouldn't walk too much, and I never say no to a ride. Now come on, *sorcerer*." He lifted the corner of his mouth and winked, then he mounted his bike.

Will's cheeks flushed as he sat down behind him. He wrapped his arm around Onyx's waist and noticed how his fingers were trembling because of his nervousness. He had thought back to their first ride a lot of times, but he never thought to be on this bike *again*.

It was only a short ride; about five minutes later the bike pulled up in front of his house. Will glided off the Harley and looked awkwardly at the older boy.

"Umm — thank you," he murmured.

Onyx smiled. "No problem." He got off his bike as well, leaning against it while shoving his hands in his pockets. "I wanted to have a word with you anyway."

Will stared at him in disbelief. "W-what? About what?"

Would he start to lecture him now, threatening to hurt him if he didn't treat his little sister well? Just like everyone else he probably believed that Will was her boyfriend.

"There's an exhibition this weekend, on medieval weapons that have been found nearby. You'd like to go there with me?"

Will's eyes almost popped out of their sockets. Was he serious? He couldn't be serious, right? He had to be joking, or maybe this was a test...

"You don't have to," Onyx said quickly, although his smile seemed a little disappointed now. "But after seeing your drawings and after hearing your story today, I thought you might like it."

Will had the feeling he was on fire and he started to panic. What was he supposed to say?

He really wanted to go to that exhibition with Onyx, but the prospect made him anxious as well. And what would Ivory think of it?

*But you're **not** Ivory's boyfriend, Will. She has no say in this.*

Or was he wrong? Was he really her boyfriend, had he somehow agreed with it and was his memory failing him now?

"Will..." Suddenly, Onyx stood so close there were just a few inches between their chests. Shyly, he looked up but he didn't dare to look him straight in the eye. "It's okay to say *no* to things you don't like. You know that, right?"

Will flinched. Was he referring to his sister's words now?

"I — I like to go," he said quietly, almost whispering. "I — I just don't get why you'd want to go there with me."

Onyx shrugged his shoulders. "I wouldn't know who else to take, it's not like a lot of young people are interested in history. Plus..." Raising his hand, he ruffled Will's hair like his brother used to do when he was teasing him. He smirked. "I'm sure you can tell me some cool stories when we're looking around."

"I — I'm not sure I can," he murmured.

His grin widened. "All true artists are unable to see their own talents." He winked. "I'll pick you up at 11 tomorrow, okay?"

"O-okay," Will floundered.

He took a deep breath as if that would help him to get rid of the jitters in his stomach.

That was going to be another sleepless night.

## 7. Mother Instinct

Will stared at his reflection. His hair was messy, his face pale and the shirt he was wearing was too wide. It was a Van Halen bandshirt. Jonathan bought him one after the concert. It had been the smallest size available, but the sleeves still fell over his elbows. After their talk about music Will was determined to wear this shirt. It gave him a little confidence. Music connected them, maybe it would avoid awkward silences. Onyx wasn't a person who would talk for hours and neither was Will.

*It's not a date, Will.*

He knew it was not a date. Onyx was a senior, he would turn 18 this year. Will was only 14. There was an age difference of at least three years and in this stage of their lives, it was a lot.

And of course, that wasn't the only problem. He didn't even know if Onyx was into boys at all. There was only a very slight chance he was. Onyx had just wanted to be nice, or he just lacked other people to hang out with. After all, he was always on his own during lunch, even when he created the impression that it was his own choice.

He shook off his thoughts. Soon, the boy would be at his door and he hadn't even had breakfast yet! He gave his reflection a nervous smile and went downstairs.

"Good morning," his mother greeted him with a warm smile after he sat down at the table. She put a plate in front of him. "El asked if she could call Mike later today. You can talk to him as well if you like? Maybe the boys and Max can come over next weekend."

The prospect made him smile and he nodded. He would love to see his friends again, but he couldn't call Mike the next few hours.

"I uh — I'm meeting with a friend today. He's gonna pick me up in a few minutes."

"Oh?" His mother looked at him in surprise. "How wonderful! What's your friend's name?"



"Uhm, Onyx. He's Ivory's brother. You know, that girl I took home the other day."

Ivory's name made El look up. The look in her eyes was suspicious, her eyebrows forming a slight frown. She however didn't say a word.

"Wonderful," his mother said once more. "What are you going to do?"

"There's an exhibition on medieval weapons in town. He was at home when we were playing D&D yesterday and he thought I would like to come with him."

"How nice!"

He knew his mother had worried sick about him, even when they had moved to this town. She told him he would make new friends, but he sensed that she was doubting that he would really find any. She was clearly happy about this development, even though Will wasn't sure he could call Ivory and Onyx his friends. Ivory had called him her boyfriend yesterday, something he didn't want to be at all. Maybe their friendship would be over once she found out he didn't reciprocate her feelings. And Onyx... He was just hard to read. At times he was really friendly, but there had also been days that he'd bluntly ignored Will.

Will wasn't ready when the doorbell rang. Quickly he stepped into his shoes and stuffed his laces inside them. Too late — his mother already headed to the hallway. Nervously he followed her. What would she think of Onyx?

The door went open. Her demeanor told him she hadn't expected someone like Onyx. As she looked over her shoulder, he saw the confusion on her face. *Is that him*, her eyes seemed to ask.

Will couldn't confirm it since he hadn't seen the visitor yet. Quickly he walked closer and looked past his mother. He blushed when his eyes met the icy blue ones of Onyx. He was really there, one hand stuffed into his pocket.

"You ready?" Onyx pushed a helmet into his hands, as if he wanted to prevent Will from turning around and leave.

Not that he even considered to walk away. In fact he could barely move at all, let alone *walk away* from the boy. However, with his mom standing next to him he didn't know what to say. He muttered a "yes" and stepped outside.

Skittishly he looked at this mom. She wasn't the type of person who quickly judged other people, but she seemed to make an exception for Onyx. Her face was straight, Will felt uncomfortable under her gaze. Especially when Onyx smirked at her in a way that twisted his stomach.

"Come on, let's go." Quickly, Will walked over to the bike.

"Will you be home before dinner?" his mom asked.

Usually she would have asked if Onyx wanted to have dinner with them as well. Her reaction to the boy annoyed him. He was less intrusive than Ivory while her mom had genuinely embraced her. Even though he felt nervous around Onyx, he liked being around him while it felt more and more uncomfortable around Ivory.

"Yeah," he said a bit grouchy, casting her an annoyed glance. She dropped her eyes, then, her lips turned into a smile. An obviously fake smile. "Have fun, baby."

Will put his helmet on his head, waited until Onyx had mounted the bike and climbed on the back of it.

"Sorry for my mom," Will muttered. She was still standing in the doorway, it started to upset him. "She's kinda overprotecting."

"That's understandable after everything you've been through."

Will froze. Did he know what happened to him? "W-what?" he stammered.

The boy said something, but his answer was drowned out by the rumbling of the bike. Quickly, Will grasped Onyx' sides. Looking over his shoulder, he saw the worried look on his mother face.

Will tried to shake it off.

He was fine. The whole situation in Hawkins had made her paranoid. Up to now, Onyx had only been helpful; he'd helped him when he fell, he'd wanted to teach Will how to play the synthesizer and he had brought him home twice. There was no reason not to trust him.

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With a heavy feeling in her chest, Joyce watched the motorcycle disappear. Her mother instinct was ringing every alarm bell it could find. What did that guy want with Will? He was at least twenty! Will was so vulnerable, he'd been though so much... She wanted to pull him close, hold him in her arms. She'd expected him to leave with a boy of his own age, or maybe a little older. But this guy was riding a bike, he hadn't even introduced himself properly... And there was something about his attitude that freaked her out. There was something unnatural about him. The past years she'd seen enough supernatural stuff to develop a sixth sense for it. That Onyx wasn't out there with her son for no reason.

She took a deep breath.

No, she had left all the horror behind. She was seeing ghosts.

Yet, she felt a little cramped as she returned to the living room. Her heart was pounding painfully in her chest and she was seeing black spots.

*Calm down, Joyce. Breathe in, breathe out.*

Her foster daughter looked at her from behind the table.

Joyce forced a reassuring smile on her lips, even though it didn't reach her eyes.

"Do you know that boy, El?" she asked, sitting down at a chair before her legs started to tremble.

"No." She stared into her glass before looking up again. "I don't trust Ivory. I don't think her brother will be much better."

For a moment Joyce closed her eyes, wishing she had been wrong. She rather went crazy than admitting that her son was in danger again.

"Why don't you trust her?" It was hard to stay calm, but she had to. Hysteria wouldn't help anyone.

Eleven shrugged. "There's just something strange about her. It's a feeling."

That's exactly what Joyce had experienced with the boy. She thought back to that cold glance. Should she warn Jim? Maybe they could go to that exposition as well, keeping an eye out? She knew Will wouldn't like it, but if something happened to him while she was ignoring her instincts, she would never forgive herself. There was surely a way to stay out of sight. She would feel much better when she knew that her boy was close. It would even help if someone could confirm that there was really an exposition out there. With his contacts in the police, Jim would surely be able to find more information. She picked up the phone and dialed the number. The restlessness inside her became heavier with every heartbeat.

## **8. Author's Note**

Dear readers,

Since I have twenty (!) unfinished stories which I still try to update, I have decided to focus on two stories at the same time and finish them one by one – which means multiple chapters a week. I've decided to let my readers decide what stories I'm going to finish first, so please leave a comment on this chapter if you want me to work on this one. I will finish all my stories, but it might take a long while before I return to the ones there aren't much people interested in.

For the amazing readers who read multiple of my works, sorry for the spam!

(I know many readers aren't comfortable with commenting, so leaving a (-) or something does the job too. ;D)

## 9. Magical Tones

His cheeks didn't cool off during the ride. Will had never sat so close to someone — and certainly not to someone who was as mysterious and handsome as Onyx.

When they arrived at the building where the exposition was held, Will glided off the bike. Only now his feet were back on the ground and his body was no longer pressed against that of the other boy, he could think clearly again.

He thought of what Onyx had said when they took off. That he had gone through a lot. How did he know? Will hadn't said anything about his past to anyone.

After locking his Harley, Onyx turned toward him and studied his face. "You okay?"

Will swallowed. He still felt incredibly warm and these inhuman blue eyes didn't make things better. Yet, he did want to enjoy this day instead of fretting about what Onyx might or might not know about him. Gathering his courage, he asked: "You told me you understood my mother's concern after everything that had happened. How — how do you know?"

Onyx slipped his hands into his pockets and gave him a pensive look. "You're not the only one who's gone through a lot," he said. "I wanted to know with whom my little sister hung out, so I did a background check."

Now, Will felt curious. He however didn't dare to ask *what* Ivory — and possibly also Onyx — had gone through. He didn't feel comfortable around such questions himself either.

"And uhm — what exactly do you know?" Still a bit nervous, he intertwined his fingers. Having been stuck in the Upside Down for a long time, having been possessed by the Mindflyer... These weren't things others had experience with.

"I know you're not a danger to my sister," he said with a wink.

"Whether it's the same the other way around, I have to figure out yet."

Confused, Will caught his glance. "What do you mean?"

Onyx lifted the corner of his mouth. "We're not here to talk about Ivory, are we? Or about the shit we've gone through?"

Quickly, Will shook his head. They didn't know each other that well. They were just here to look at an exposition, that was all.

They headed to the entrance. The museum didn't look very spectacular; it was a converted farmhouse. Onyx paid for their tickets, where after they entered a hall. A few old people walked around, but there was nobody of their age.

On tables and in showcases, weapons were displayed, now and then equipped with a tiny piece of text. Although Onyx told him he'd wanted to take him to hear some more cool stories, it turned out that he knew a lot about weapons already; how they were used and in what period. Will tried to remember as much as he could; he could use this information when building a new campaign.

"How is it that you know so much?" Will asked.

Onyx shrugged. "I like history."

They walked further. It was only a small exhibition; after twenty minutes they'd seen everything. Will felt disappointed; he liked to be around Onyx and the boy knew a lot.

"Come, I wanna show you something."

Something fluttered in his stomach as the older boy looked him in the eye. Will followed him outside, across a big patch of grass. Onyx headed to an old willow and sat down against the trunk. The tree was big enough to offer space for both of them. Before them, was a meadow. Will didn't know what was so special about this place and expectantly, he looked to the side. The moment his eyes caught the icy blue of the other, he forgot how to breathe. A blush crept to his cheeks.

The smirk on Onyx' face made everything ten times worse.

Quickly, Will averted his eyes. Onyx knew all too well what impact he had on him. He thought back to the time the boy had subtly led him on his lap when playing the synthesizer.

"I wanna show you something that's fucking awesome — tho it's kinda heavy. But I'm with you and I'll make sure nothing happens to you."

Confused, Will looked around. There was nobody to see and this was possibly the most boring landscape he'd ever seen. What kind of danger could come for them in a place like this?

Onyx took something from the inside pocket of his leather jacket. It was a harmonica. In disbelief, Will stared at it. That was a pretty dull instrument...

The moment the boy moved it to his lips, he changed his mind. Notes floated up, wrapping their melodies around him. They sounded magical, bringing forth tones that didn't match with an instrument like this.

Will started to feel light in the head. His surroundings grew dim. Was Onyx trying to make him fall asleep? Vaguely, he noticed a caress across his hand. Immediately he widened his eyes, but his surroundings were still foggy. Colors flashed around him. A dull headache came up.

Suddenly, he could barely breathe anymore. In panic, he wanted to tear himself away from the magic that wrapped itself around him and tried to suffocate him. Something was wrong. Very wrong. He could feel it; he could feel a darkness he would always recognize.

It felt like dark strings glided through his mind and he started to scream. The Mindflyer — was it back? Thick tentacles winded around him; he wanted to scream but darkness invaded his mouth.

"Surrender to it, Will."

Onyx' voice sounded hypnotizing.



"I'm with you, you're safe."

Will froze. His fingers clamped around the fingers that were holding his. It seemed to be his only anchor, the only thing clinging to the light. He squeezed his hand. Onyx squeezed back.

Then, the shadows moved away, giving room to the light.

And to sounds, to images.

Before Will could take a breath, there was another shock to process.

Everywhere around him people were screaming, horses raced past him and swords were swung around. Arrows cut through the air; one, inches from his head. Smoke hung in the air; close to them, a house collapsed. High flames came out of the remains.

A cry got stuck in his throat.

Onyx pulled his hand away. For a moment Will believed his legs would give in because Onyx' hand had been his only stability; then, Onyx' arm glided around his waist.

"These are just images," the boy said. Nevertheless, he pulled him closer in a protective way.

Will's whole body was shaking. "Where are we?"

"In 1685."

## 10. When Sleeping is a Crime

*In 1685.*

Will could hear the words, but he didn't understand their meaning. What did Onyx mean? The year 1685? But — how was that possible?

A horse came right at him and Will felt the panic surge through his body. He wanted to jump back, but Onyx held him tight and before he knew it, he was screaming.

"Ssh." The older boy pulled him closer. The wild horse was only a few feet away from them — he would be crushed under its hooves! Right before he expected the inevitable pain, he turned his head to the side and buried his face against Onyx's chest, which was slightly vibrating because the boy was chuckling.

"These are just images, Will. Imprints of the past." Onyx's fingers stroked his hair in a soothing way.

Confused, Will pulled himself away from the boy. He looked over his shoulder and saw the pitch-black horse gallop away from him. It had run right through him. Baffled, he looked up to Onyx. "What — What is this?"

"This is what they call magic." The boy winked at him.

Slack-jawed, he kept staring at the black-haired boy. Magic? Sure, he wasn't unfamiliar with the supernatural, but *this*...?

"Is this a hallucination? Or did we really... travel through time?"

"The latter. Kinda cool, huh?" Onyx let go of him and shoved his hands in his pockets. He showed him a crooked smile. "When I was a child, I figured that my surroundings sometimes changed when I was playing an instrument. Usually, I don't take anyone with me, but I thought you would like it since you like history so much."

Now Will was convinced that no harm could come to him, his enthusiasm returned. Yet, there was a pit in his stomach. Smoke still filled his nostrils and everywhere around them were pools of blood,

groaning people and mutilated horses. During the missions he came up with, he easily talked about fights and battles but seeing one with his own eyes... It was very different and he found it hard to deal with all the suffering.

"Can we help them?"

Onyx shook his head. "No. Like I said — we can only *see* the past. We have no influence on it." Onyx started to walk towards the buildings. "But at least you'll get a glimpse of what a real Western village looked like."

Quickly Will walked with him, afraid of what would happen when he lost sight of Onyx.

"So... we're only here mentally? Or did we disappear from the place where we were?" It was all too hard to comprehend.

"Until we return, we'll be sleeping in the real world."

"And can you also transport us to other places? For example — to the old Egyptians?"

"Only when we're in Egypt. My gift is location-based. But we could have gone back thousand years as well."

"Wow, that's so amazing." In awe, he looked up to Onyx.

This guy became cooler and cooler and it still felt surreal that he chose Will of all people to show this to. For years, he had been invisible, and thereafter he had become the freak of the school. But Onyx... Onyx gave him the feeling that he was a normal kid and that Onyx himself was the extraordinary one — but this time in a positive way!

Will was relieved when they left the battlefield behind and visited the village, even though there was a grim atmosphere as well. The hatches were closed and the streets were empty. Now and then someone peeked outside and Will had to remind himself time and again that nobody could see them. He asked Onyx what other places he had visited and he discovered it became easier and easier to talk to him. He was still mysterious and thrilling, but Will did feel

comfortable around him and although he'd been contemplating every word earlier today, he felt freer now. Although he didn't feel *completely* comfortable; Onyx could look at him in a very peculiar way that made his heart do flip-flops and turned his cheeks red. Sometimes, he briefly touched Will to draw his attention to something, whereafter it felt like his whole arm or shoulder was on fire.

Onyx didn't give him the feeling that he was super young and although he had wrapped a protective arm around him, he wasn't patronizing him the whole time. Something his mother and even his brother *did* do since his escape from the Upside Down. Sometimes their overprotective behavior drove him crazy, constantly reminding him of his trauma. Apparently, Onyx knew what happened to him too, but he didn't show it and let Will make his own decisions. He felt free at Onyx's side and every time the older boy smiled at him, it felt like he was growing. Did Onyx enjoy spending time with him? Would he want to hang out more often? His stomach tickled at that prospect.

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Joyce didn't care whether people would think she was crazy. She had practically pulled her boyfriend from his workstation, demanding him to come with her to that exposition. With a grim face, Jim had agreed. First, he'd made sure there really was an exposition and then he'd investigated the mysterious boy. Joyce didn't know his surname, but his search for the names 'Onyx' and 'Ivory' didn't lead to any results. Checking it with his colleagues didn't help them further either. It didn't have to mean anything, Jim had tried to convince her. But to Joyce, it meant a lot. Something was wrong.

Right now, they walked around at the exposition. Just like she had feared, her son was nowhere to be seen. The woman behind the counter however told her there had been two young men who'd bought tickets; the oldest one had pitch-black hair. It didn't put her at ease now she wasn't seeing her son. Going outside again, she looked around at the parking lot until she saw the motorcycle. She sighed in relief; they were still here. Somewhere.

"This is his bike. Maybe you can run the plate," she said to Jim when he came to stand next to her.

In silence, he watched her before sighing. "Let's wait first, Joyce. Up to now, there is no reason to assume that something is wrong."

There absolutely was. Her mother instinct told her enough.

She rushed back to the building, this time she walked around it. There was no one to be seen. Where could they've gone to? Anxiously, she buried her nails in the palms of her hands. It wouldn't happen again, right? She couldn't lose her son again! Her breathing sped up and she shook off the soothing hand that Jim placed on her shoulder while starting to walk in a random direction. Further ahead was a forest. They'd probably gone there. What would that creep do to her son? Maybe Will had escaped the boy and was he running between the trees now. Her heart clenched at the thought of how scared her son must feel.

Suddenly, she saw two legs from behind a tree. Terrified, she stared at them. Was someone lying on the ground? She started to run to the body. Tears rolled down her cheeks as she recognized her son's jeans. What had they done to him? Images of a pale face and bleeding limbs flashed before her eyes.

Panting, she stopped next to the tree. He wasn't alone; the black-haired boy was lying next to him, his fingers clenched around Will's. Both were lying motionlessly in the grass. A harmonica lay beside the stranger.

Dazed, Joyce stared at the two. Their chests were going up and down in a steady rhythm — they were clearly alive. They were sleeping. What teenagers went to sleep in broad daylight? Things became stranger and stranger.

"See? Everything's fine," Jim said.

She glared at him. "Everything's *fine*? You think it's *normal* that they're asleep?"

Jim shrugged, rubbing his neck while muttering something about Will having weird hobbies anyway.

Joyce crouched down next to her son, shaking his shoulder. He didn't

respond. Her stomach contracted. What if that strange guy had given him drugs?

"Will?" Her voice sounded shrill and she shook him. Fear squeezed her throat when he didn't answer. "Will!" she yelled.

Jim knelt beside the other boy, checking his pulse. "His heart rate isn't elevated."

In vain, Joyce tried to wake up her child. He was completely unresponsive. Should she call for an ambulance? Was he in a coma? Her glance fell upon their laced hands. In a fit of rage, she yanked their hands apart. She didn't want that creep to *ever* touch her boy again!

This time, her son did respond. His eyes flew open and he let out a soft moan.

"Mom?" he muttered in confusion.

"My poor baby!" With tears in her eyes, she took her son in her arms and cradled him. "You scared me."

"What are you doing here?" Will pushed her away. His glance shot to the strange boy, who sat up straight too and looked from Joyce to Jim, his eyebrows raised in a silent question.

"Let's go." She tried to pull her son on his feet. "I don't know what's going on, but that boy is up to no good. We're going home."

Will tore his arm away. "What? What are you talking about? What are you doing here?"

"I had a bad feeling about this meeting. Come with me, Will."

She didn't want to discuss this, not here.

"Since when is having an afternoon nap a crime?" the boy asked. He leaned back on his hands, taking her in with a mocking face. Something dark stirred in his icy blue eyes.

"From now on, you will stay away from my son!" she snapped.

"Mom!"

Joyce pulled him on his feet. "No, Will. We're going home. Now."

Will glanced indignantly at Jim, who nodded to the parking lot. Growling, Will tore himself away and stormed towards the car.

Joyce cast another glance at the strange company of her son. He looked her right in the eye and she felt a chill go down her spine.

She hadn't imagined it. Something was very wrong about this boy and his motives to spend time with her boy, could impossibly be pure.

## 11. Not A Child Anymore

With a sulk face, Will stared out of the window. He felt embarrassed—his mom treated him like a baby! What would Onyx think of him now? They couldn't even go to an exhibition without his mother dragging him home with her cop boyfriend! Tears of powerless anger burned in his eyes. She knew how hard it was for him to make friends! And now there was finally someone who thought he was nice, and his mother acted like a complete idiot! Next time, Onyx would surely ask someone else!

As soon as his mother turned off the engine, Will threw the car door open, got out, and slammed it shut. He rushed to the front door, grunting in frustration as it turned out to be locked so that he still had to wait for his mother.

"I understand that you're upset, Will," his mom sighed while she came to stand next to him, putting the key in the hole. "But there's something really off with that boy."

He jerked his head to the side. "That someone is different than other people doesn't make him a bad person!"

If anything, Onyx was super friendly and sweet. He had shown him things nobody else could. He was different, he was *strange* and Will loved it. Normal people didn't like him anyway.

"It neither means that someone like that can solely have good intentions, Will."

Will huffed. "Just open the door."

He was sure his mother tried to catch his glance, but he kept his face averted. He was just sick of being treated like a child!

"Don't run upstairs. I want to talk to you about this."

Will gritted his teeth. As if she could make things undone with a conversation. He didn't want to talk at all. She wouldn't understand how special Onyx was anyway. And even *when* he told her that the



boy had taken him back in time, she would call him crazy. Or no—she would probably claim that Onyx had *drugged* him!

He however didn't want a giant fight either and so he headed to the living room, where he leaned with his backside against the couch, crossing his arms in front of his chest stubbornly. The sooner his mother was done talking, the better. He didn't even have time to think about the time-traveling and Onyx's powers!

"Sit down, Will. I don't like this attitude." His mother gave him a stern look.

Will rolled his eyes rebelliously but sat down on the couch. His mother came to sit next to him and petted his hair.

"You do understand I want what's best for you, right?"

"Why did you come to the exhibition?"

She sighed. "That boy just caused me a bad feeling. What are you doing with such an older boy?"

"He isn't *that* old, he goes to the same school. He's in his final year. Hopper is three years older than you too—you never found that strange, right?"

"It's different when you're younger."

"Why?" Will bent his head and stared at his knees. "He's nice, Mom. Nobody ever asked me to go somewhere. You know I'm not good at making friends."

She placed her hand on his knee. "And that's exactly the reason why I'm worried, baby. Don't you think it's a little strange?"

"What?" he muttered. "That someone likes me? That someone wants to spend time with me and doesn't think that I'm a freak?" He swallowed with difficulty. There was a giant lump in his throat.

"No one thinks you're a freak, sweetheart. And if people do, they don't know you. They have no idea what a sweet boy you are."

Will huffed. "And why do you think Onyx can't see that?"

His mother said nothing.

He looked to the side, feeling slightly triumphant, but the feeling faded at the sight of the deep lines in her face. He sighed. He didn't want her to worry about him.

"You told me I had to let it go—all the things that happened to us. That we moved to this place to start over. But that means that *you* have to let things go too, Mom."

She bit her lip. "I'm trying, Will, I really am. I..." Sighing, she bent her head. "You know what? Why don't you ask him to visit some time and have dinner with us, so I can get to know him. And.. apologize," she admitted reluctantly.

The idea that Onyx would be in his house, made him sick with nervousness. Wouldn't it be super weird to ask him over? Well—at least he was happy that his mother wanted to apologize. "I don't know if I want that. I don't know him that well and you were acting really weird, Mom."

His mother rubbed her face.

The silence that fell, pressed heavily upon him.

"Can I go to my room now?" he asked quietly.

She heaved a deep sigh. "Go ahead."

Will stood up immediately and went up the stairs. He fell down on his bed, facing the ceiling. There was a weird feeling in his stomach when he thought back to this afternoon. It had been bizarre to walk around in the Wild West. He remembered how Onyx had pulled him to his chest when that horse stormed towards them. The memory made him feel warm and a smile spread across his face.

With all of his heart, he hoped his mother hadn't scared away his new friend.

